27. To induce more investment for R&D activities, a weighted deduction of 125% on the sums paid to any university, college or an institution or a Scientific research association for the purposes of scientific, social or statistical research has been provided.

28. A National Venture Fund for Software and IT Industry (NFSIT) has been set up with a corpus of Rs. 100 crores, out of which MIT shall contribute Rs. 30 crores.

29. For reduction of transaction time for export/import clearances, Ministry of Civil Aviation has finalized the scheme of 'Known-Shippers' for doing away with the 24 hours cooling off period. Two shifts have been introduced on week days and single shift on holidays at the Air Cargo Complexes at Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi and Goa.

30. STPI has set up a business support Centre in the USA, which is operational since November, 1999, to promote business for STP units and provide marketing support to STPs.

31. Information Technology Act 2000 has been enacted. This act deals with Cyber Security, Cyber Crime and other information security related legal aspects. This will encourage expansion of e-commerce through internet.

Electronics and Computer Software Exports

2677. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) What are the estimates of the electronics and Computer Software export Promotion council regarding growth of software and services exports in rupee terms during April to September, 2001-2002, as compared to Rs. 12,450 crore in the same period during the previous year;

(b) what were the overall IT Exports from April to September this year as against $ 3.6 billion in the first six months of 2000-2001; and

(c) the details of expected estimates of electronics hardware exports segment fixed during September, 2001-2002 as compared to corresponding period of 2000-2001 ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN) : (a) Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council

(ESC) have estimated Software and Services Exports amounting to Rs. 16,500 crores during April to September, 2001-2002.

(b) As per records of ESC, IT exports during the first half of 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 were as under :

April—September, 2000 :	Rs. 12,875 crores (US$ 2798 million)
April—September, 2001 :	Rs. 17,200 crores (US$ 3659 million)

(c) Electronics Hardware exports during April—September, 2001 were Rs. 2500 crores, as compared to Rs. 1800 crores during April—September, 2000.

Beedi Workers in the Country

2678. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the number of beedi workers in the country, State-wise;

(b) the details of the measures taken so far to improve the working conditions of the beedi workers;

(c) whether the workers are still facing certain problems for which they have launched agitation; and

(d) If so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL) : (a) There are about 44 lakh beedi workers in the country, A statement showing the State-wise break-up of these workers is annexed. (*See* below).

(b) Government have enacted the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, to protect beedi workers from exploitation of the employers, which is being implemented by State Governments. Government is also implementing a number of welfare schemes in the fields of Health, Housing, Social Security, Education and Recreation from the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund for the welfare of beedi workers and their dependants under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976.

(c) and (d) The demands were made in the past also by the Beedi Workers Union which include fixation of uniform minimum wages, abolition of contract